

PUNCH

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ANY London business man who paid 85gns. for a five-day lecture course by American automation expert John Diebold must have been rather upset to be told that despite electronics, offices could never really run themselves—especially as this was just what his secretary was bleating when he got back.

CHARIVARIA

MR. KHRUSHCHEV's suggestion that east and west should reach agreement gradually—"start with the hors d'œuvres and work up to the fish and meat course"—tactfully stopped short of any *bombe surprise*.

UNDER the heading "The Quiet Man," the *Daily Express* touched on General Speidel's "tip-toe visit" here as the German commander of British troops in Germany. But he could hardly be expected, in the circumstances, to risk stamping around much.

RUSSIA's development of an ornithopter, an aircraft which flaps its wings like a bird, has brought mixed reactions at the Quai d'Orsay. Some



regard it as an infringement of France's rooster symbol; others say it's just routine crowing.

A *STAR* EDITORIAL, asserting that "population pressure is a far more fundamental problem than H-bombs and rockets," adds a wish that "statesmen would realize this." Populations hope that they won't.

MINING engineers are said to be less enthusiastic than some over a recent rain-making experiment in Queensland, when an aeroplane "seeded" clouds over Mount Isa and produced a cloudburst, so that the river Leichardt "rose 17ft. in two hours and a mining engineer was swept off a bridge and carried half a mile downstream."

"THE BARE fact of long residence in London," says the L.C.C.'s Chief Medical Officer of Health, "appears to



be likely to increase the risk of dying." Depending, of course, on how long.

TEN DAYS' holiday in Sweden is *Tribune's* prize for its current essay competition. It doesn't seem much for such tricky set subjects as "What do you mean by a Socialist foreign policy?"

"TIN SEE-SAWS ON NEW EXPORT PLAN" *Evening News*

Sell anything if you try.

A Moscow cemetery official has been imprisoned for extorting money from people purchasing burial plots; action will later be taken against the purchasers for planning to go West.

Get In Line, There

(The *Daily Mirror* has guaranteed that its reporters will not intrude excessively on privacy)

THE "paper for the young in heart" Got off to a propitious start— In which it noticeably led The papers for the young in head.



Diary of a Body

THE dilemma over the televising of the Rochdale by-election may have the happiest results. Suppose the candidates were all to be televised, and it was then found out that they had offended under the Representation of the People Act, presumably all three of them would be disqualified. But if at a general election the programme companies ranged around with their cameras, sending Chris Chataway to talk to this candidate and Lynne Reid-Banks to that, and after the poll the losing side, with typical British sportsmanship, invoked the Representation of the People Act, not to mention the Television Act, we might find ourselves in the position where every member of the House of Commons could be unseated. This Cromwellian situation could bring nothing but joy—especially if the Independent Television Authority had to be wound up at the same time.

Chto Moya Liniya?

SURELY Mr. Zarubin had his tongue in his cheek when, as his last official act as Russian Ambassador to the United States, he signed an agreement for the mutual exchange of radio and television programmes, films, student groups and scientists by way of a "significant first step" in the improvement of understanding between the two peoples. I simply long to know, for instance, the kind of television programmes the Americans propose to

offer. There is, I see, a clause in the agreement providing that the exchanges will not take place if the texts are deemed incapable of improving relations. Which improves them more, I wonder—Mike Wallace hectoring a frightened interviewee, or something like *Eta Vasha Zhizn* ("This is Your Life") or *Chto Moya Liniya?* ("What's My Line?")? And the films: will the Americans plump for stern social realism like *Baby Doll* and *Tea and Sympathy*, or will they go in for more imaginative productions such as *The Thing from Another World* and *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*?

The signing of the agreement seems to have taken Mr. Khrushchev by surprise. When exposed to the first cultural exchange from the West—the visit to Moscow of Mr. Mike Todd and Miss Elizabeth Taylor—he went to some trouble to ignore it.

Total Control

"GET me some lunar maps, about 1:50,000, will ya, fellow."

Anyone who has ever done a turn on a military staff will be feeling thankful just now not to be working under General Homer Boushuc, deputy director of the U.S. Air Force's research branch. This is the man who announced last week that an American missile base on the moon would put paid to Russia's hopes, and backed the good news up with some highly technical data to the effect that the moon station would have forty-eight hours to

track any missile fired at it from the earth "and anyway it could be placed on the far side of the moon, out of sight." Generals always expect their staffs to be able to produce any information they want at a moment's notice, and show small gratitude for it when it comes. "Dammit, man, you've brought me the wrong side" is all the thanks Boushuc's GI (Ops) is likely to get.

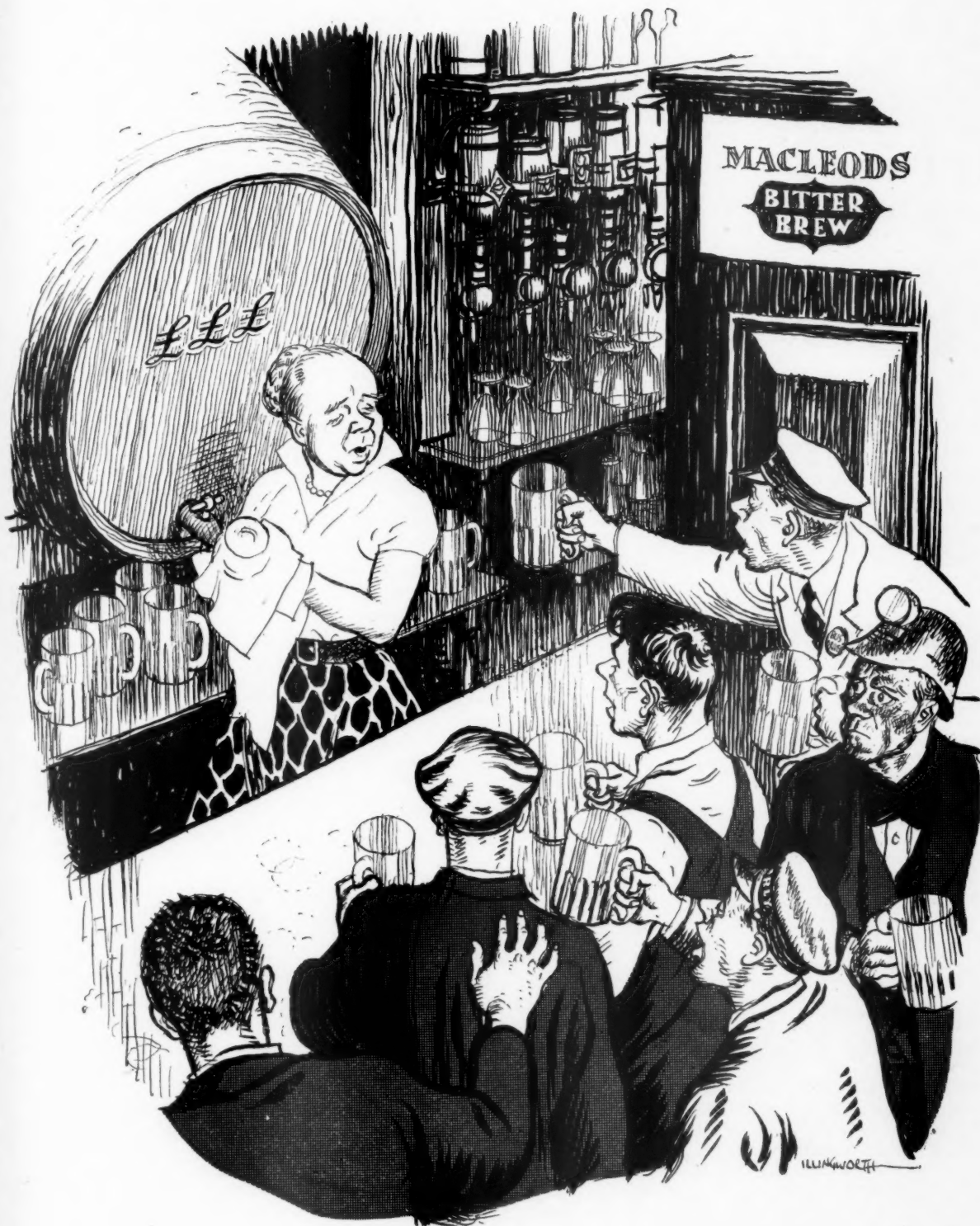
Assuming that the General is right in saying that his moon station would have forty-eight hours to track missiles from the earth, it looks (to the non-military mind) as if Russian earth stations would have forty-eight hours to track missiles from the moon—rather more, in fact, if Boushuc is going to have to start his rockets off in the wrong direction and then bring them, so to speak, round the corner. But it may be that the difference in gravitational pull is in Boushuc's favour; his moon rockets will get off to a better start, and finish extremely strongly. If that is the factor that is going to decide the next war it will at least be a comfort to be able to express the justice of our cause as a simple mathematical formula.

"Whoever gains the ultimate supremacy of space," General Boushuc has finely said, "gains control, total control, over the earth." This makes his blind namesake's preliminary announcement, "I sing the wrath of the gods," sound pretty thin stuff.

Slip of the Machine

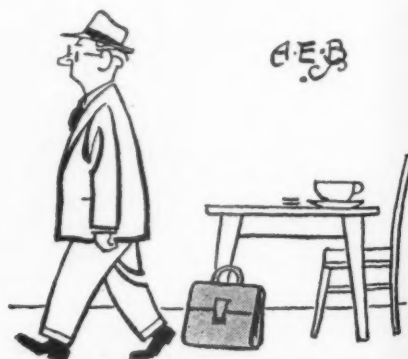
EUPHEMISMS die hard. That hardy, slow-fading old soldier "printer's error," time-hallowed screen for editorial bungling, had a reincarnation in a different form last week when the *Daily Telegraph* explained: "The chairman of Kent County Council is Sir William Nottidge, not, as stated on Saturday owing to a transmission error, Sir Leslie Doubleday." That's the trouble with these new-fangled means of communication. True, in the good old days of manuscript or telephone it was easy enough to trip over the odd letter or two, as when one newspaper killed Lord Desborough in mistake for Lord Bessborough. But these teleprinters, radio photographs and kindred monsters have overwhelmed the apprentices who are using the sorcerer's tricks; you feed in Nottidge one end and it comes out Doubleday at the other. I believe actually his name was Frankenstein.





"Time, gentlemen, please."

What Really Happened on December 4, 1957?



AT approximately 1700 hours on December 4 the Lowlands of Scotland suffered an earthquake of "some magnitude." The convulsions began along the southern fringe of the rift valley, and subsequent calculations have proved that the epicentre of the 'quake lay about twenty miles underground in the region of Muirkirk.

Loss of life was insignificant. Hill masses in the Southern Uplands were ravaged by the disturbance, great fissures opened up, valleys were churned into chaotic rivers of rubble by the convulsive earth-folding, high pastures avalanched with tremendous force under the tectonic thrust, and dense clouds of yellow dust and smoke blossomed to a height of 3,000-4,000 feet.

Fortunately (though the word has little meaning in view of later developments) the area immediately affected was thinly populated. Isolated homesteads were shattered and the greater part of the village of Macfiley L'Estrange was destroyed by violent tremors and fire, but no major centre felt the full force of the disaster.

At 1713 hours the U.S. Emergency Bomber ("F" for Foster) was on normal patrol duty from its base at Grippon. Navigator Charles R. Schweitz had just turned the nose of the aircraft north at about 5,000 feet when—in his own words—"the damn' crate suddenly twitched all over."

"I checked with the skip and engineers and was relieved to find that everything was okay. This ship sure can take it. Then the skip yelled and

pointed. Below and perhaps four miles to starboard we saw an enormous mushroom of yellowish smoke. The stuff was billowing above the hills and valleys in a dirty cloud. I guess we were all too stunned to say anything. We ran in to get a closer look-see.

"It was terrifying. The village of Macfiley L'Estrange seemed to quiver and collapse. Sparks Naylor, our radio man, was yammering that he couldn't get a peep out of base. That made us think. Our hearts thudding we turned for Grippon, eight miles away in the Sneath valley.

"The station was a shambles. Hangars and maintenance buildings sprawled like drunks and the main runway was cracked and pitted from end to end. We all looked at the skip. 'Well, men,' he said, his voice unnatural with emotion, 'this is it. This is action.' He gave instructions briskly and the mechanics' squad retired aft to assemble the big banger. We checked fuel and swung east..."

At 1732 hours Professor Denis Sluys of the Department of Seismology, Edinburgh University, began to telephone his colleagues. He spoke first to Professor Reddish of Cambridge, then to Dr. Falstead of London. The Edinburgh reading had been as high as 7.8, and in seismological circles this meant intense excitement. "Make the most of it, Denis, old son," said Professor Herblick of Oxford. "Probably put you in line for a knighthood."

At 1748 hours Dr. Brayne, senior assistant to Professor Sluys, came in

with the first eye-witness reports of the 'quake. He mentioned the massive cloud of yellow smoke. "Mon," he said, "it was awfu", reminded me as much as anything of . . . Why, professor, whatever's the matter?"

At 1749 hours Professor Sluys had a heart attack.

At 1802 Supreme Allied Headquarters received a telephone message from Dr. Brayne. A secretary put her hand over the mouthpiece and spoke to Edna, another secretary. "What's a seismologist?" she said. "There's some crazy egghead on the line, wants to speak to the General."

"Sort of geography, I think," said Edna.

General Blumfeld asked his secretary to ask Dr. Brayne to put his request in writing.

Between 1820 hours and 2200 hours the world's seismologists bombarded 10 Downing Street, the Foreign Office, the White House, N.A.T.O. headquarters, U.N. and the B.B.C. with desperate, frantic appeals. At 2210 John Snagge interrupted a session of "Twenty Questions" to broadcast a message to the world. By then it was too late.

At 2150 hours a tremendous explosion shook and felled the Moscow suburbs of Kraznogorsk. At 2212

Marshal Bulganin dispatched coded radio instructions to six hundred Russian submarines and thirty-five I.C.B.M. sites in Russia, Poland, Albania and East Germany.

By 1105 hours on December 5 the surviving spokesmen of a ruined East and a ruined West were suing for peace.

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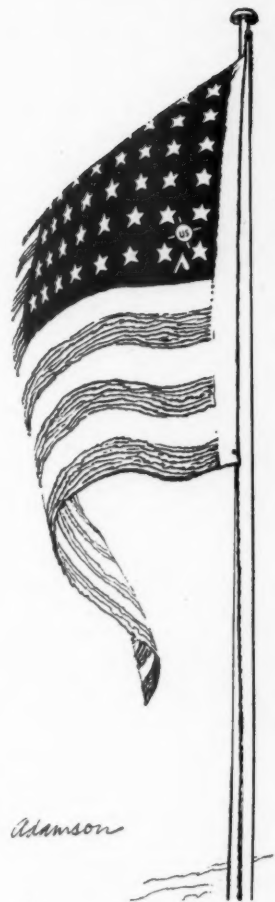
Nightmares can be terrifying. They can also be instructive. Now when I look back to December 4 I find myself giving thanks that the underworld saw fit to locate its earthquake in Mongolia instead of in Scotland. It took Soviet scientists nearly two months to decide exactly what had happened in the white wilderness. Time and space were on our side. It could have been different.

BERNARD HOLLOWOOD

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"Purchase Tax on key containers, cheque book covers, shopping list covers, address book covers, stamp book holders, note book covers and similar receptacles will be chargeable at the rate of 60 per cent. as from March 1 under Group 23 of the Tax Schedule, unless they are merely plain folders having no means whatever of retaining the articles which they are designed to hold."—Customs Regulations

That's us, at the end.



Hold It, Judge

By E. S. TURNER

IT is disappointing to all true lovers of liberty to read that a so-called code of ethics has been drawn up for the guidance of American news photographers in courts of justice. They are not to move about in court, or let off flash-bulbs. "Find a good spot and stay in it," runs the code, without expressing any opinion as to what is a good spot. Other requirements are: "Refrain from taking close-ups," "Dress conservatively and inconspicuously," and "Conduct yourself as a gentleman at all times."

In Britain, alas! a court photographer is no more than a sleek specialist who hypnotizes royalty into assuming stiffly casual attitudes, but some of the grey-beards among us can remember the days when photographs were taken in British courts of justice.

For reasons which many will find

incomprehensible this innocent and educative practice was banned. To-day the photographer dedicated to the exposure of human frailty must snatch his pictures of jovial co-respondents and tax-dodging comedians as best he can in the not-too-immediate vicinity of the courts. It is a dangerous trade, for an over-zealous operator is liable to have his camera dashed to the ground by a petty gangster or even by a furious cuckold (furious, perhaps, not so much at the idea of publicity, or at being cuckolded, but at being awarded only £75 10s. for the loss of a wife). Also, there is a by no means negligible risk of photographing the wrong person. It is for these reasons that many photographers prefer to spend the whole of their working lives taking pictures of starlets arriving at, and departing from, London Airport.

In view of the notoriously reactionary attitude of the Law there is little hope that the privilege of taking photographs in British courts will ever be restored, even if (and this is a large assumption) cameramen were willing to have their back hair cropped and to remove their duffel coats. It is certain that the more conscientious of our photographers, much though they would like to be let loose in the law courts, would never subscribe to such a cramping, and indeed craven, code as has been enunciated in America. They know that it is their professional duty to make a mockery of the Establishment, and all unprejudiced observers will concede that they do a brilliant job. But no man can properly carry out a task of character assassination when his hands are tied by a restrictive covenant.

Surely the public, the tax-paying,

inquiring public, has its rights in this matter. It is not really morbidly interested in the men and women in the dock, unless they are well-known entertainers, but it has long wanted to be assured that the Law, even in its moments of majesty, is still human.

A few years ago a photographer was awarded a "best news picture" prize at the hands of Lord Montgomery for a study of a colonel thrown from his charger on Horse Guards Parade (it is fair to say that Lord Montgomery did not *select* this picture). Given such a precedent, why cannot the Lord Chancellor present a similar award for a candid picture of (say) a High Court judge with his robe caught fast in a door and his wig simultaneously snared by a fly-paper?

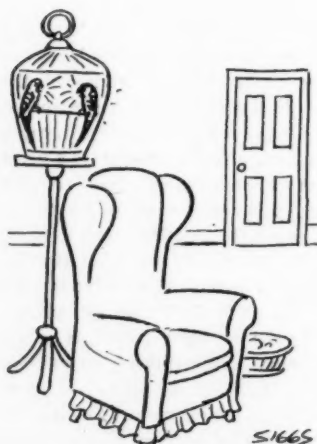
It is no answer to say that a judge can always be photographed, like any peer or prelate, at a public dinner, stuffing his wide-open mouth with Dover sole or (apparently) gazing glassily down the corsage of his lady companion. The public want to see happy off-guard glimpses of him on his own ground. They want to be able to say to themselves "Now is he really sleeping or is he just concentrating?" They want to look over his shoulder to see what he is doodling. They want to share that expression of bemused curiosity as he peers at a jar containing dubious substances found in the stomach of a rich widow, or the testy scowl with which he halts proceedings until the Royal Air Force has finished its fly-past, or even the look of ineffable wisdom

with which he explains to the jury that words, in certain circumstances, mean what they say. After all, it is not as if there was any danger of a magnesium explosion setting fire to his wig, as in the bad old days, and surely a man with such powers of self-command and concentration as an English judge is not going to be put off his summing-up by occasional requests like "Hold it, judge" or "Just one more."

The public are heartily tired of pictures of eminent counsel climbing in and out of motor-cars with brief-cases. They want to see these luminaries robed and on the job, hectoring, huddling, yawning and apologizing, scratching their heads under their wigs with silver pencils, surreptitiously filling in crossword puzzles, or even with their faces creased in sycophantic smiles at the judge's jests (all except the man under the lee of the Bench who, fancying himself unobserved, mocks his colleagues' hypocrisy).

Very probably, too, newspaper readers would be interested to see a few candid shots taken in the public benches, for, as television reveals, the public are intensely interested in the public. They would like to know who are (or were) the bride's friends, who are the bridegroom's, and who are merely housewives from Croydon who have come up on a day ticket to hear a bit of dirt. It would be instructive, too, to see a picture of the man who, from time to time, stands up at the back and scornfully asks "Is this British justice?"

In a day when any one of us is liable to be stopped in the street by a television interviewer and asked whether we believe artificial insemination to be immoral, and then to have our shy mumblings repeated in millions of drawing-rooms, the protection which the courts enjoy from reasonable publicity is surely indefensible. Let there no longer be one law for the Law and one for the Public.



NEXT WEEK

A new serial by T. S. Watt, "Under New Management," describing strange events that followed an attempt by forces of evil to take control of a banking company, starts in PUNCH next week.



America Day by Day

P. G. WODEHOUSE reports from the U. S. A.

THERE are few men in the United States more capable of spotting trends than Mr. Walter Kerr, the dramatic critic of the *New York Herald-Tribune*, and when he tells us that in the American theatre—and so presumably throughout the country, for the theatre reflects the essential beliefs and intuitions of the time—there is a rising wave of anti-birdwatcher sentiment we know that the tip is coming to us straight from the horse's mouth.

"I can remember," he says, "when anyone who watched a bird was automatically lovable and tenderhearted, a rare spirit of temperate mien," giving as an example his fellow dramatic critic, Mr. Brooks Atkinson of the *New York Times*, who, it seems, watches birds incessantly, no doubt finding this one adequate, that one inclined to overact, and another wrongly cast and with little conception of its part. (It surprised me to learn that a dramatic critic ever comes out in the daytime, but apparently Mr. Atkinson does.)

"The current theatre," Mr. Kerr proceeds, "has taken another look at these fellows, and the jig is up. Go to see

Compulsion and you will get a hint of the truth. Who wanders out into the woods with a pair of binoculars? Who reports that he has seen a rare prothonotary warbler? A killer, that's who. And abnormal, besides."

And in another play the birdwatcher was a Communist, in Mr. Kerr's powerful phrase up to his binoculars in actual treason and in close touch with the birdwatchers of the Kremlin.

This showing up of birdwatchers in their true colours will give pain to many, but I for one welcome it. I have never approved of these men who go about the place goggling at our feathered friends in the privacy of their homes. I can imagine nothing more unpleasant for a chaffinch or a meadow pipit than to get settled down for the evening with a good book and a pipe and, just as it is saying to itself "This is the life," to look up and see Brooks Atkinson peering at it. When you reflect that strong playwrights wilt when they catch Mr. Atkinson's eye you can imagine what the effect must be on a sensitive bird.

If I had a young friend who was

contemplating embarking on a life of crime I should say "Go to it, my boy, and best of luck," but I would advise him very earnestly to keep away from Visalia, California, lest one false step there land him in the Tulane County prison, where the authorities have just installed in the cells what they call talking pillows. These are worked with a tape recording gadget, and what happens when the malefactor turns in for the night is that his pillow, which has hitherto taken no part in the conversation, suddenly starts murmuring in his ear: "You will have faith in yourself, faith in others and faith in the essential decency of mankind. You will know your faults and overcome them. You are filled with love and compassion for all."

There is a lot more, and it goes on at intervals all night, with the unfortunate internee, who is trying to get to sleep, wondering what gave them the idea that they were filling him with love and compassion. The theory is that it implants in the subconscious the moral principles necessary for living in society, but the general feeling in the prison is unfavourable to the experiment, the preference of the inmates being for those strong silent pillows which keep themselves to themselves, and the humane

are shaking their heads over the whole thing. It is the sort of thing about which, if it were happening in England, there would be some forceful paragraphs in John Gordon's column in the *Sunday Express*. But there is no *Sunday Express* in America, and no John Gordon. (God's country, many people call it.)

And how have things been getting along of late at the main post office in Washington? Pretty well, on the whole, they tell me, but the men up top have decided that in future they are going to be very careful how they word their communiqués to Joe Biggs, who works there as an extra hand during the Christmas season, for he has one of those literal minds. At Christmas time last year they told Joe to deliver a truck load of New York mail, and he said "Leave it to me," promising to snap into it without delay.

This was on a Monday night, and at 6.30 on Tuesday morning Joe rang up from a suburb eleven miles from New York, to say that he had run out of petrol and what should he do now?

Understanding officials came to his rescue. They called New York, the truck was unloaded, supplied with gas, turned round and headed for Washington. On Joe's arrival there they explained to him that when you are told to deliver New York mail, what is meant is that you are to take it to the Pennsylvania Railroad loading platform a couple of hundred yards or so from the post office. It is not necessary, they said, to drive two hundred and twenty-eight miles with it. He promised he would remember another time.

Not much more news this week, except that an impostor is going round the Broadway night-clubs pretending to be Mr. Lee Mortimer, the night-club expert of the *New York Daily Mirror*, and on the strength of this getting cheques cashed. Mr. Mortimer has issued a statement to the various club proprietors, recommending them not to cash these cheques.

"In fact," he says, "I wouldn't even advise you to cash a cheque for the real Mr. Mortimer."



"You, Hank, will handle the vodka-still protection racket. You, Duke, will organize the speakeasy end. Always provided, of course, that Khrushchev's on the level about introducing prohibition, and always provided we can duck under the Iron Curtain okay."

LETTERS

(Letters addressed to the Editor, unless specifically marked otherwise, may be considered for publication.)

FIRST THINGS FIRST

To the Editor of *Punch*

DEAR SIR,—I have been stung by Fred Majdalany's verses in your January 22 issue to the following reply:—

Dear man, you shouldn't read my female prattle.

I never read your *Portrait of a Battle*.

I find it an obsessive, dreary bore
The way men harp for ever on the war.

Private life matters infinitely more,
Including Barbara Goalen's white front door.

I love my friends, my food, my chicks,
my home.

I'd sooner paint the house than march on Rome.

Am I, who like small pleasures, more
inane

Than you who hanker still for Alamein?
Come, children, let's have one good
game before

Fred chucks a bomb at Barbara's white
front door.

Yours faithfully,

ANNE SCOTT-JAMES

THE BISHOP'S CHEESE

To the Editor of *Punch*

DEAR SIR,—That old cartoon of yours showing a Bishop pouring port-wine into a cheese had more "punch" than *Punch* seems to know.

The handsome prelate is the Right Rev. Henry Montagu Villiers (1813—1861) Bishop of Durham. The cheese is no allegory, but the Rev. Edward Cheese, a fortunate clergyman who married the bishop's daughter. The £1,300 on the label is the value of a living conferred upon Mr. Cheese by his big-hearted father {
-in-law.
-in-God.

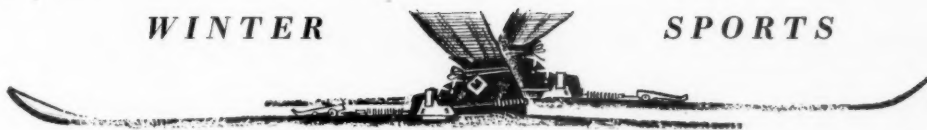
Your obedient servant

L. E. JONES

[R. G. G. price writes: I certainly should have mentioned the specific as well as the general charges the cartoon was making. A paragraph on the opposite page ensured that contemporary and later readers got the point. Another correspondent tells me that the attack was supposed to have helped to kill the Bishop. *Punch* as episcopicide!]

WINTER

SPORTS



The Snows of Yesteryear

By H. F. ELLIS

ONE of the consolations of later life not mentioned either by Socrates or Cicero is that it becomes possible to look at the Snow Reports without an aching desire to be back at Davos or Klosters. It is all so long ago now. The passage of time confuses the mind, so that there are moments when I can almost believe that W. G. Grace and I used to go down the Cresta Run together. And how we all laughed when Carlyle came such a purler at Grindelwald! It was as much as Gladstone (then quite a stripling in a red knitted cap) could do to get the sage's skis off, he was in such stitches.

There must be different faces out there now. The technique seems to have altered, too. Bindings, I read, are so arranged that they "automatically release the foot if violently twisted." Well, good gracious, if our skis had come off in the old days every time the foot was violently twisted it would have been quicker to walk. The whole art of skiing was a series of glides interrupted by violent wrenches. The only available quick-release mechanism in emergency was some other skier with enough control to come alongside and snap back a strong spring clip somewhere round the boot-heels.

This conviction that things have changed nips nostalgia in the bud. I find that I can read of sunshine and two and a half feet of powder snow at Wengen not merely without a pang but with positive relief. I am undisturbed to hear that "International skiers are generally agreed that the best boots are made in Austria." In last week's *Observer* I read, with a quiet mind, that the test for good bindings and boots is "to see whether you can lean forward, hands behind the back, and kiss the tips of your skis without overbalancing."

One must beware, in middle age, of being arch, but we did not kiss the tips of our skis in Wengen in 1929.

This brings me to a point about learning to ski. There are indoor ski-schools now, so that the muscles can be

toned up and the simpler turns practised without leaving home. Somebody has invented wheeled skis to add verisimilitude. Arrived at the resort, no novice dreams of venturing off the nursery slopes until he has had a week or two with an instructor. Or so they tell me. The whole business is not much less solemn than golf. The old way, my way at least, was simpler and quicker. Showing off is a bad habit to get into, I agree, because later in life one can never get away with it; but in youth there is just a chance that it may be put down to high spirits or dash. And it brings results.

The girl from the hotel was half-way down the dreaded Bumps when I started. She wore a yellow beret, and a touch of yellow somewhere else about her otherwise sober outfit. She had straight dark eyebrows and could ski, slipping off height on her Christies with a skill that even now might flutter me a little. My own method of taking a slope at this time was to traverse right, halt by turning the skis slightly uphill, hoist the left leg in the air and rotate it through as many degrees as nature allowed, hoist the right ski in the air and try to bring it round and down alongside the left before the latter started to run, and so away on a stately traverse left. I lacked the nerve to try a non-stop turn, except on the mildest nursery slope.

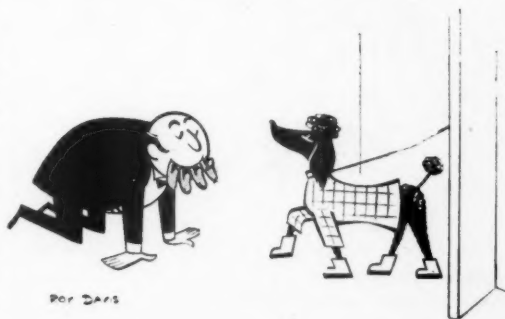
But I wanted to catch her up. More, I wanted very much to flash past her with a surprised "Hullo!" So I just went ahead and skied. Not straight, of course, but steepish. And when the time came to turn, I turned. The snow was beaten pretty hard up on the Bumps, and the turns I used—not Christies exactly but a sort of wrenched skid, the kind of violent twist that would unski a modern novice in an instant—worked very well. The

wind whizzed past my reddened ears and I began to gain.

The girl did not take the wood path at the bottom of the Bumps, but turned down through what I believe is called Suicide Gap. I followed, avoiding the padded telegraph pole that stands, or used to stand, in those parts by merely raising in the air the ski that was heading for it and riding easily on the one that was not. You will often see guides do the same sort of thing when they want to scratch an ankle. Then, as Dornford Yates would say, I put my foot down and let her go.

The next field is very steep, and I took it almost straight. I had now no fear, and if I was going to whizz past the girl this was the moment to do it. I think perhaps my plan was to try my first Telemark soon after I had said "Hullo!" But the word, because of some unevenness in the ground, was never spoken. What I said instead, as she struggled to unclip my skis, was "Ouch! Not that one, damn it—the other." The romance, for this and other reasons, did not burgeon. But I had learned to ski.

I suppose that, as skiing is organized now, no such short cut to proficiency would be open to a young man. For one thing, his skis would release themselves fifteen times in the first hundred yards. For another, he would scarcely have the nerve to pay such headlong addresses to a better skier—certainly not if his boots were made (as mine were) in Nottingham.



Snowmen of the World, Unite

By EVOE

IF only the mysterious beings who haunt the highest mountain tops would meet for summit talks, how sane their advice would be, how philosophical, how cool. Their traces have now been found in the Caucasus, as well as on the Himalayas, and very soon you may be sure they will be discovered in the Andes, or even the Rockies, for the Younger Hemisphere hates to lag behind the Old for long.

At my preparatory school there was a fierce feud between those who considered that Aconcagua was the highest mountain in the Andes and those who fatuously gave the palm to some other peak. I was always an Aconcaguan because it was the stronger side.

But this is by the way. On those Chilean altitudes there must certainly be snow-folk of human intelligence no

less bright than that of their Asiatic kindred. And let me say at once that the word "abominable" seems to me a grotesque libel on a community, unknown, I admit, yet probably as innocent as it is wise. They are men and women, as I see them, of immense age and beauty, with centenarian children, a race magnificent, immarcescible, a race which in the course of ages has withdrawn from a world which contains nothing but taxes and tumults, wheels and bombs and war.

They wear no clothes, I fancy, finding that their own fur suits them better, and they do not feed, unless it be now and then on a handful of snowberries or on the stems and roots of the winter rose. They kill no living creature. Unmolested are the snow leopard and the snowy owl. They build no houses

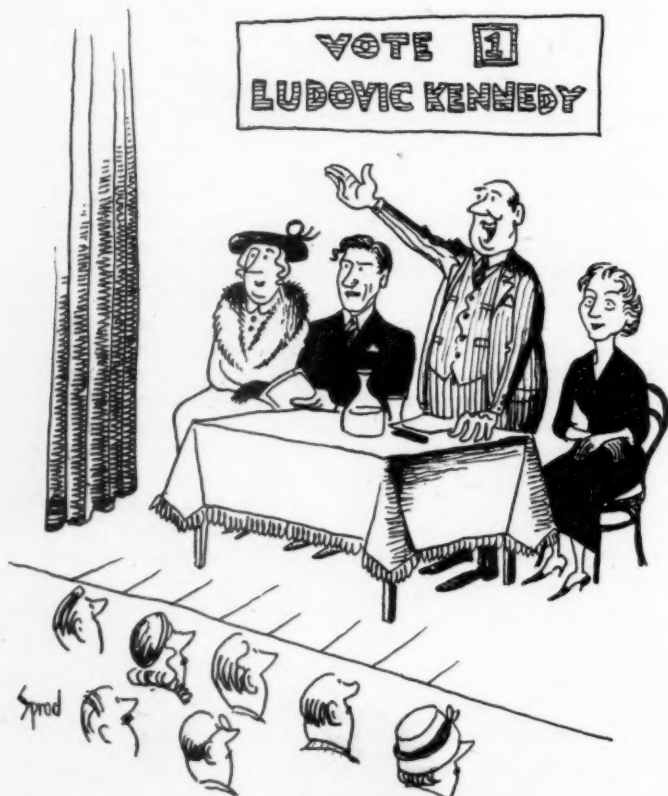
and barter no goods. They meditate. There on those niveous heights they hold, I think, the wisdom of the ages in their heads and the secret of happiness between their paws.

Instead of going always farther they went ever higher, for they had no wish to conquer the sea or the air. The snow that we all find so charming became for them a passion and also a refuge impregnable. They abolished transport. They have no sledges, no toboggans, no skis to interfere with their quiet meanderings. If they have any sport it is to push a large snowball about, singing the glacier song. Their language is probably a loud yodel or, when they are stirred to any great emotion, a sound like the falling of avalanches or the howling of a maniacal blizzard. This is when they are laughing at us. Occasionally they hold ceremonial dances, when snowboy meets snowgirl.

Have they no art? They have. They carve the faces of their monarchs or chieftains on the mountain sides, and since they are all carved in snow they soon become obliterated and have to be carved again, with a difference of feature regulated by current estimates of fame. Each monarch holds a snowball in the left hand and a long icicle in the right.

I thought these things, and I not only thought them, I said them aloud. I said them to a man who came to my front door and asked me to lend him a rope. I misunderstood his meaning at first and said that I should be delighted. But it turned out that he merely wanted the thing to tie about one of the wheels of his motor-car, because they kept turning round and round without any noticeable progress, thus interfering with his unaccountable wanderlust. When we had tied the rope round the wheel the car still refused to move, so a small party of frozen citizens was empanelled and we all pushed behind while he sat at the wheel, until we had urged his Springbok, or whatever it was called, on to a better part of the road where the tyres would bite.

It was when I had slipped and fallen on my knees that I said to him some of those things which I have written above. Few, and totally inadequate, were the words that he spoke in reply.



"Feeling worried? Money tight?
LUDO-VIC will put you right.
Liberal's tonic does the trick
Vote for sparkling LUDO-VIC."

Ski-ing in the Stores

By PETER DICKINSON

THERE was snow in the street outside. It lay thin and rather grubby, but still, with the help of a wind off the Urals, made it possible to believe in the dazzling peaks and headlong excitements of a Switzerland almost as highly coloured as the posters that summon one out to it. I had never obeyed the call before, and so was busy laying in equipment and advice.

Belief, I found, had to work rather harder in the enormous store. The air in the winter sports department was torrid and laden with a drift of scent from the cosmetics department downstairs. The tone of the department was so hushed and reverential that the dummy in the corner (knitted Fair Isle cap with tassel, mauve wind-cheater, tight black trousers; face tanned, eyes distant) looked sadly out of place. Luckily the salesman to whom I spoke did not seem to suffer from the self-distrust inherent in the place.

"Of course," he said, "you couldn't possibly be seen at a big resort in a waisted jacket this year. Draw-strings are out. In a small village, perhaps..."

We gazed across the room at a customer who was trying on a skiing jacket in front of a mirror; its vehement electric blue would be clearly at home between white snow and azure sky, but here, with below it a pair of striped trousers and above it a head whose natural habitat was obviously a bowler, it looked like an impropriety. It also looked expensive. For one reason or another the customer hesitated and doubted. I too doubted and sweated in the heat. My salesman did not seem to notice; assured and splendid he continued to compile my provisional wardrobe, orange, emerald, black, white and vermillion.

When I had first spoken to him I had explained that this was my first attempt to ski, and that I did not want to equip myself for a lifetime of stemming and then find that I didn't like it; he had seemed to understand, but now it looked as though the limit of his sympathy was going to be to allow me to wear three pairs of my own socks on the slopes. Furthermore an adept I had



"Two marks off for begging..."

met at a party told me that if I appeared dressed like a colour-chart and then spent my days in a series of uncouth tumbles, experienced dressers and skier were going to start asking themselves who I thought I was.

Limp with heat and embarrassment I tried to distract the salesman from his multi-coloured hoard on the counter by asking about ski classes. Yes, his firm gave a series of classes to help beginners accustom their muscles to the attitudes which skiing demands and everyday office life provides no practice in. Suddenly his knees gave, his ankles twisted sideways, he slouched agonizingly and held for several seconds a pose that I recognized as that which gangsters adopt in films when the tommy-guns are finally turned on them. "You take these classes?" I asked.

He straightened up and nodded across the room. "Actually," he said, "we have Herr Günther over from Austria to take them."

I followed his glance and saw that the daedal-clad dummy, though still motionless, was sweating too. Even as Herr Günther, human enough to earn a living by helping Englishmen choose their skis, he still looked out of place.

A little comforted I said "As a matter of fact I was going to hire my skis out there."

As if discussing dangerous opinions the salesman lowered his voice and said "Yes, a lot of people do that."

Then, dragging himself back to the cosier certainties of a world he understood, he turned to tot up the cost of the pile of clothing on the counter.



With Skate and Fork

By R. G. G. PRICE

Thoughts on the Wintry Past

THE kind of man who keeps the correspondence columns of the *Sunday Times* on the bubble will be able to tell you straight off that in thirteen winters in one century the Fleet river was thick with apprentices playing some ancestor of a modern game on the ice. The majority of us simply have a dim memory of one of the little bits of non-military history we met at the bottom of the school: it used to be colder, and the fun-loving English, armed with cudgels, were always crowding on to the Thames. Without losing my amateur status I can now go a little beyond that.

The Neolithic weather was unsuitable to winter sports, much too warm and dry; but things improved in the late-Iron Age, though I know of no evidence that Agricola took his pleasures in the snow. It was more in Boadicea's line: she would have had scythes on her

toboggan. Leaving Anglo-Saxon skiing to the specialist, I might just mention that in Henry II's time young men in London used to make seats of ice as big as mill-stones and sit on them and get pulled along by their friends. Some of them fought on ice with poles as a preparation for the glories to be won in war. (Lord Montgomery is a keen winter sport; the connection still lasts.) Some of them put bones under their feet and shoved themselves along by something described as "a little picked staff." I see this attractive instrument as something like an alpenstock and something like a shooting-stick and something like one of the things park keepers use to pick up paper. One can see how useful it would be when attacked by a practising warrior with a pole.

Between the time of Fitzstephen's *Description of the Most Noble City of*

London and Stow's day the social status of skating dropped. To the Tudor mind it was fit only for children. These changes in games are very odd. What would have been the Tudor attitude to being drawn along on a seat of ice? Or to ballooning, for that matter? The same contempt did not apply to all winter sports. Snowballing might not be considered the Sport of Kings by Sir Arnold Lunn, but Henry VIII liked it. Skating went up in the world when, according to the indefatigable Quennells, the Cavaliers brought iron skates back with them from Holland at the Restoration. This suggests that the objection to skating had been an objection to the use of bone rather than to moving about on ice. Metal rates above bone for spoons and I suppose it might well do for skates.

Roller-skates are said to have been introduced in a scene in Meyerbeer's

Le Prophète in Paris. Later they were patented by an American. In 1876, curiously enough the year that *Mind* was first published, an ice-rink was opened in the King's Road, Chelsea, and called a Calciarium—a name that might well be revived if anybody starts a highbrow, minority-user ice-rink, one that would put on shows of the Theatre Club type. A more rewarding line of speculation is why there are so few winter sports compared with the rich range of sports played on grass. I cannot help feeling that what we have to-day is the residue after centuries of winnowing. Probably once there was ice-badminton in Northumberland and living chess on ice in Renfrewshire and ice-wrestling in the Soke of Peterborough. This assumes that the cradle of winter sports is the British Isles. Claim and counter-claim have left the priority of discovery in frightful confusion. Apparently the Canadians say the Scotch stole the secret from them and exported it to Norway, where the Swiss picked it up but did not realize what they were on to until shown by visitors from Cambridge, though to put it as lucidly as this may be a little misleading.

One reason for the narrowed scope of British winter sports is that the Thames remains more consistently fluid than it used to be. You would often have found eleven inches of ice and a shopping centre. There were sideshows. Forty coaches plied daily. It is odd that the only part of all this fun to stick in folk-memory is the roasting of oxen. Part of the explanation may be that one thinks of the fire as being in direct contact with the ice. As at a British barbecue to-day, the great thing would not be the taste of the food but having it served in the wrong place. Would one want to go on eating riverine meat? Some of those old frosts lasted a very long time and surely after the first few days Londoners would have drifted back to not eating beef between meals? The Thames has pinched a good deal of glory which it must, in reality, have shared. What was eaten when the Trent froze or the Severn or the Tweed? A grim query. The Thames has the name for freezing, and that is that. Who cares that in January 1891 a trap with tandem was driven across the Serpentine? Only the people who wanted to bathe.

TOBY COMPETITION No. 2

YOU are a member of the Brains Trust discussing the question: *Is it more important for children to be kind or honest?*

PROFESSOR ALFRED: The question is utter nonsense. However, if I had to choose I should plump for kindness. Honesty is a matter of all kinds of general principles, and the time for general principles is late adolescence; but unless kindness is learned early it will never be learned at all. Anyway, a kind world might be more comfortable than an honest one and comfort is quite a good guide.

LADY HERMIONE: Really! You make my blood boil! Kindness very often means being soft with people you ought to be hard with. I believe children should be taught to put their principles above absolutely everything else whatever. Make 'em tell the truth even when it hurts, and keep their hands off other people's property. Of course, I'm not a brute and I don't mean that children shouldn't help the lame dog over the stile. But the important thing is for a child to be straight as a die—whatever that may mean.

YOU are invited to join in with a speech of not more than 100 words.

A prize consisting of a framed *Punch* original (to be selected by the winner from all available drawings) is offered for the best entry. Runners-up, at TOBY's discretion, will receive *Punch* Bookmarks. Entries (any number, but each on a separate piece of paper, and accompanied by a separate entry token) by first post on Friday, February 14, to:

TOBY COMPETITION No. 2

PUNCH

10 BOUVERIE STREET

LONDON, E.C.4

The entry token which must accompany all entries is at the bottom right-hand corner of this page and should be cut off and attached to the entry.

The Editor's decision is final, and no correspondence concerning awards can be answered. The winning entry and runners-up will be published on February 26. Competition No. 1 winner and runners-up will appear on February 19.

Competition No. 3 will be set next Wednesday, February 12.



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TOBY
2

THE NEW MAYHEW—



—A BOHEMIAN SOIREE IN THE METROPOLIS



IN almost any night, in the poorer quarters of the more fashionable sections of London, I have calculated that there must be held upwards of nineteen or twenty separate social and recreational gatherings of men and women who, being actively engaged in pursuits of an artistic nature, or finding it agreeable to identify themselves with one or other of such pursuits, are temperamentally or financially incapable of entertaining one another in a conventional fashion; and who therefore band together in secret, in small apartments, for a night of unbridled pleasure and debauchery.

That such "Bohemian" dens still exist I received ample and concrete proof during my investigations; and I was at last fortunate enough to be able to spend nearly four hours at a typical soiree, having been introduced into the circle as a temporary sub-editor on a periodical devoted to gardening.

The apartment, comprising three main rooms, was situated several floors up in a decaying Georgian dwelling-house. Its tenant was a young gentleman of frail appearance, with discoloured teeth, whose occupation was the composing of rhymes to be sung upon television to promote the sales of drugs. It was but intermittent work, he said, but he had hopes for his autobiography, which was practically completed.

He was twenty-six. His wife was twenty-two, and had painted a small picture. Although the rooms were small, some pathetic attempt had evidently been made to render them habitable. Thus, the fireplaces had been hidden behind thin board, and minute electric fires were sometimes turned on for half an hour at a time to provide heat. The walls of the chief room were "whitewashed" in a grey shade. The floorboards were roughly painted in green, and through the cracks a strong breeze moved some flimsy pieces of gay matting that had been placed to deaden the sound of footsteps. The ceiling was covered with striped wallpaper.

A hundred years ago Henry Mayhew, a former joint-editor of PUNCH, wrote "London Labour and the London Poor." ALEX ATKINSON and RONALD SEARLE make a modern reassessment.

The two small electric lamps were shrouded with black shades, and thus spread a curious semi-darkness throughout the room (except at the corners, where utter blackness prevailed, creating the illusion that the room was oval in shape). Some flimsy furniture had been scraped together, including a sagging "divan" bed, a grandfather clock (transformed into a pink bookcase), an antique table with gold-coloured legs, and two arm-chairs.

There were present seven people, and a further five had arrived by the time I made my departure. Of the females, two were shop assistants, but had been connected only with artistic departments such as Perfumery, Gowns, or Books and Stationery; two were employed irregularly as members of a "crowd" in dramas for television; and one was a playwright and adagio dancer. The males included an assistant press-agent, a book-reviewer, two West End actors, a ghost-writer who had lately written the memoirs of a notorious criminal for a Sunday newspaper, and an art student.

No signal was given for the commencement of the debauch: the proceedings began, in a casual fashion, by the handing round of London gin diluted with quinine water, of which all openly partook. Indeed, four people accepted *second helpings* of this fiery liquor, and very soon afterwards the next stage of the orgy began. This took the form of Bohemian conversation. The topics touched upon included the weather, a scandal involving a famous entertainer, extra-marital experience, excesses, a new play, world politics and the cost of living.

The licence permitted during these daring discussions was of the broadest kind, words and phrases such as "hell," "in bed," "liar," and "Good G-d!" being freely employed. Nor was the behaviour of these reckless gypsies any less outrageous than their talk: for they

thought nothing of lying at full stretch upon the floor, or kneeling on the "divan" in stockinged feet, or now and then putting an arm around one another's shoulders in the most brazen manner imaginable. Cigarettes were smoked incessantly, so that the atmosphere became progressively more nauseous. Besides alcohol, quantities of salted nuts were consumed, which I assumed must provide some narcotic stimulus. Fewer than two people never spoke at a time. Popular "catches" were intermittently sung, and the general noise was rendered more intense by symphonic music from a wireless set, which formed a constant background.

That they were fully aware of the dissolute nature of their behaviour, and revelled in it, I was left in no doubt; for their laughter was shrill and uninhibited. Here, out of the sight of ordinary conventional citizens, they could shamelessly loosen their neckties, comb their hair in full view of the company, take vodka and sherry wine in the same glass, exhibit their legs to above the knee if they were females, audaciously belittle the reputations of eminent personages, throw cigarette-ends out of the window, or stay awake until long after the normal hour for retiring: and all without any qualm of conscience or thought for the morrow.

Fearful of the depths of informality to which these desperate vagabonds might be tempted to resort, I made my *adieux* (which went unheeded) and departed. At that time the party had partaken of an average of three alcoholic drinks per head, and appeared disinclined to risk more. But it seemed certain that still further dissipations were imminent: for there remained a bottle of Spanish wine of the burgundy type, and a squabble had broken out, behind an armchair, between a husband and wife, on the subject of Liberalism.

ALEX ATKINSON

Next week: Seller of Nuts, Ice-cream and Soft Drinks

Inquiries about earlier instalments of "The New Mayhew" are constantly being received. Issues containing these may be obtained from the Circulation Manager, *Punch*, 10 Boulevard Street, London, E.C.4, price 1s., post free.

Ars Brevis, L.C.C. Longa Est

BROODING on the L.C.C.'s proposal to amalgamate the art schools of the Chelsea College of Science and Technology and the Regent Street Polytechnic, I was not surprised to find myself walking up the steps of the proposed new building in Chelsea. I was accompanied by a kindly member of the staff who had volunteered to show me round. The legend over the door ran as follows:

THE CHELSEA COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY and SCHOOL OF ART

"Back in 1958," said my guide, "there was quite a little controversy about building this college."

"I seem to remember," I said, "that there were formerly two schools of art, one near here and another in Upper Regent Street."

"Schools of art?" said my guide. "Oh, I understand. Luckily we don't have to bother much about the art side now, though of course it's a very well run little department in its way."

I asked if we could visit the art side, but he was not very encouraging.

"Let's go in here first," he said, opening the door of a laboratory where some students were at work on experiments for splitting the earth open down the middle and searing humanity to a crisp rasher. I edged rather hastily out into the magnificent plastic and chromium corridor and suggested following a small arrow, which was labelled Art Department and pointed down a flight of steps. He agreed reluctantly and apologized for the dank walls between which we were descending.

"When the site was acquired," he said, "the chairman of the Further Education sub-committee particularly pointed out that nothing whatsoever had been said about what sort of a school of art was recommended. So you will agree that to use this former air-raid shelter, even if the light is rather tricky, was a wise administrative decision."

The stairs ended in a dark passage where light faintly came through a glass-panelled door. The door was locked, but by pressing my nose against the glass I was able to see (like an old friend met in alien surroundings) the torso of Venus de Milo.

"The students are only allowed down here for an hour or two a week," said

my companion. "We think it's psychologically undesirable to encourage them to spend too much time drawing."

"And where are the students now?"

"Upstairs," he said, "rubbing elbows with the engineers. It's good for them."

"Good for the engineers?"

"No, no, of course not, good for the art students." He broke off to drag a cowering figure from behind a pile of

antiquated easels. This amorphous creature, though dressed in the uniform tartan trousers and duffel coat, was quickly expelled by a side door and my guide returned to me dusting his hands.

I inquired what goal the art students had in view.

"They are studying to teach students," he said, "who will be studying to teach students who will be studying to teach students who will be studying . . ." but here my own snores awakened me and terminated the interview.

VIOLET POWELL

THE BRITISH CHARACTER—

TWENTY YEARS ON



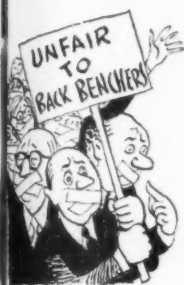
THE drawing entitled "The Gentlemen were all at school together" appeared in March 1939.

Despite the changes that have been brought about in the world by the war, the television, and so on, identical scenes can still be observed to-day. What the picture shows is three men, or rather gentlemen, discussing their prospects in the Formation Dancing competition at the Lysoleum Palais de Danse. This explains why they are wearing the archaic uniform of white bow ties and long swallow-tailed coats, never to-day worn for any other occasion.

From the gaiety of the gentlemen's

expressions it is easy to see that their chances in the competition are pretty good. For the ladies, alas! it is quite different. All they have to do is to follow their partners' steps, knowing that if they fail to do so adequately they will have to pay their own fares home, whereas if they succeed they will probably be talked into a *mariage de convenance* with their partners. Hence their gloom.

The title of the picture is not allegorical but literal. The three gentlemen are all graduates of the same course at the Santos Silvester School of Ballroom Dancing.



ESSENCE OF PARLIAMENT



WITH the postponement of the Bank Tribunal debate the week was left a little bit to small beer and social occasions. The first social occasion was at question time on Tuesday, when a large number of members—particularly of Conservative Members—found themselves at St. Margaret's rather than St. Stephen's, Westminster, intent upon wishing all happiness to Mr. John Eden. Across the road Mr. Arthur Lewis took the opportunity of moving a motion to undo the Rent Act. But there was just time to see Mr. Eden blessed and to scramble back across the road in time to give the Government its usual majority.

Wednesday's question time was the best. The House advanced through gentle comedy. Troops on Christmas Island, said Mr. Winterbottom, had thrown food at an officer. No, they hadn't, said Mr. George Ward. They had thrown beer at a policeman—which at any rate proved that they had beer. Mr. Woodburn was against parking-meters on the curious ground that they might put car-attendants out of employment. In much the same way in more gracious days his ancestors were doubtless against railways on the ground that they put stage-coaches out of employment. But it was not, to tell the truth, to listen to these exchanges that a crowded House had assembled. They had come in the hopes of a row when Mr. Robens put his private notice question to Mr. Macleod about the bus dispute. They were disappointed. The absent shade of Mr. Thorneycroft now loomed over the Chamber, dominating all, but Mr. Macleod, right or wrong, is not a man to be easily rattled. He knew what he intended to say and he stuck to it. He had exercised his own judgment. "You are the first Minister of Labour ever to do that," shouted out Mr. Robens. "I prefer not to take up that

interruption," said Mr. Macleod, looking at Mr. Robens and Mr. Bevan, his predecessors in that office, sitting opposite to him. To do them justice, the Socialists had clearly taken a decision that it would be unwise to make a Parliamentary row while the situation was so delicate. Mr. Gaitskell and Mr. Bevan sat there in silence, and they deserve their share of the credit that things passed off so quietly. Mr. Robens was left to make the running. Unlike Agag, he does not walk delicately, but then, also unlike Agag, he was not cut in pieces.

Thursday was a day for the hunting of the Hare. It was obviously a trifle ironic that the first duty of a new economy Minister of Agriculture should be to propose a supplementary estimate, equal almost exactly to the mystical £50 million that is so much in controversy and contracted by the iron Chancellor himself in his previous incarnation. Yet, whatever had happened, it was clearly not Mr. Hare's fault nor was anybody else proposing to do anything very much about it except make a joke or two. Mr. Hare was twitted by ex-Ministers in front of him and ex-Ministers behind him, Mr. Tom Williams and Mr. Turton, but he took it all in good part and in fact came out of it all a good deal better than he sometimes used to in the old War Office days.

The only real blow that got home was Mr. Gooch's complaint against him for holding up a little pig by its hind-leg.

The week's most interesting debate was Mr. Oram's on Friday on reform of procedure—interesting but a bit academic because everybody wants the procedure reformed, but few want it reformed so badly that they are willing to stay in London on a Friday to say so—or rather to vote for a Select Committee out of which, even if set up, it is unlikely that anything will come. Back-bench speakers are certainly very angry

at the virtual monopoly of debate by Privy Councillors. There are two separate grievances. They complain that the official Government and Opposition spokesmen speak too often and too long—and so they do. But beyond that there is the custom that any Privy Councillor, even though not on the front bench, is always called in preference to any non-Privy Councillor. When there were just one or two elder statesmen sunning themselves in retirement this was a pleasant enough courtesy; but to-day, what between resigned Conservatives and retired Socialists, whose principles will not let them go to the Lords and whose habits will not let them ever stop making speeches, the back benches are littered with Privy Councillors. Mr. Shinwell, one of them, has constituted himself their champion. He wants front-bench Privy Councillors to speak less so that back-bench Privy Councillors can speak more. That is by no means the plan of his colleagues—in particular of Mr. Ellis Smith, who wants neither frying pans nor fires, but to put a damper on all Privy Councillors. Mr. Ellis Smith had the better of the argument, but it takes more than an argument to stop Mr. Shinwell from speaking.

PERCY SOMERSET



Young Innocents Abroad

By MALCOLM BRADBURY

A research student concludes his travels in Canada

TOWARDS the end of that summer of 1951 a pathetic figure might have been observed on the highway between Ottawa and Montreal, plodding a barren stretch of roadside with his little bedraggled suitcase and hopelessly gesturing with his thumb at the cars that roared past. Beneath the high wide sky, blackening up with night clouds, he drags wearily on, drooling *weltschmerz*. He has managed to hitch-hike thus far, but now his luck has failed; he is virtually penniless and unable to afford the bus-fare; now night is falling and most of the traffic has stopped, and it seems to the figure that he must spend the night in a ditch. He has never slept in a ditch before, and the prospect disturbs him. Who is this figure? His hair needs cutting, his clothes all need a good wash, and the badge of his blazer is coming unpicked. Yes, who is he?

It was me, all the time. And oh, what a far cry from the debonair, up-and-coming youth who, but a few short weeks before, had promenaded the boulevards of Nottingham, the toast of all the flappers. Now the operations of a very fancy sort of fate had brought me to this empty highway, and to the lowest ebb of my fortunes.

At precisely this point fate changed its face; an old, old car, full of French-Canadians with moustaches, stopped and took me on into Montreal. It was quite late at night when I arrived in the city, my face worn, sallow, soulful. I went straight to the Y.M.C.A. and took a room. I washed all my socks in the bathroom and then went out to look at the town. It was full of bright coloured lights. I had not been walking for more than five minutes when I heard a great many banging sounds and the wail of police sirens. I realized that a gunfight was going on in the street in front of me. It was not merely the bright lights and the chatter of French that made Montreal seem sophisticated.

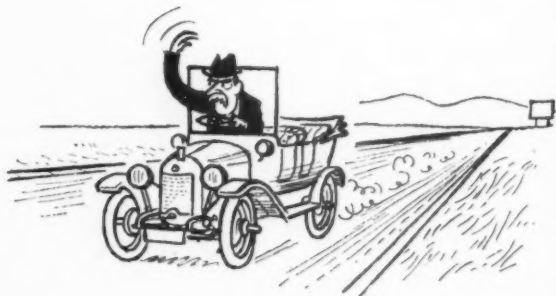
I was not quite sure why I had come to Montreal. All I had now was a few dollars, a bus ticket from Toronto to New York and a plane ticket from there to London. The date of the flight was still two weeks off and I felt I ought to be seeing something of French Canada.

In Montreal there was a drugstore where you could get egg and chips, apple pie and coffee for 35 cents. Every day I used to get up and go first to the B.O.A.C. office to read the English newspapers. I used to pretend that I was meeting a Mr. C. B. Malatrap off a flight from Tokyo. One day a clerk called me over and said that Mr. Malatrap was on the next flight in. I never went there again. Afterwards I would go and look at all the shops, comparing the prices of shirts, go and have a snoot round the docks and flour-mills, climb to the top of Mount Royal for the view (which began to annoy me) and climb down again. By now it would be 3 o'clock, time for a 35 cent egg-and-chips. After this I would go and look at more shops, comparing the prices of ties, go to McGill University and watch, very superciliously, the cricket team; then to the railway station, plod a few streets that I'd missed and finally, towards nine o'clock, go and have another 35 cent egg-and-chips. Afterwards I would go to bed.

One day I found that in spite of the egg and chips nearly all my money was gone; and this very fancy fate that took a hand in my affairs that summer helped me out again. I went to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, lodged in a large former hotel on Dorchester Street, and told the doorman that I wanted to do a broadcast. I was passed to and fro from person to person and floor to floor, and then I found myself on the ninth floor, writing a talk. Someone had given me a typewriter and some paper. Then they took me into a cubicle and I spoke the talk into a microphone. Then they gave me a cup of coffee and a cheque for twenty-five dollars. Sometimes I try to think of this happening with the B.B.C., but my imagination fails.

By now I was tired of looking at shops and flour-mills and I decided to go on to New York. I went out on the main road and hitched a lift to Toronto. The wonderful Canadian fall was just beginning and as we drove down by the St. Lawrence all the trees were turning to shades of flaming brown, yellow, red. From Toronto I took the night bus over the border. The next morning I was in the big multi-level bus station in New York. I picked up my tatty suitcase and began to carry it through the streets to the Y.M.C.A. It was hot and sweat coursed down my face. People stared at me; finally a policeman stopped me. He told me that in New York people just don't carry suitcases through the street; it's not that kind of city.

After washing my socks at the Y.M.C.A. I went out and looked at the shops, comparing the prices of shoes, and at Carnegie Hall, the Museum of Modern Art and Grand Central Station. Gradually my money ran out again. I used to go into automats and peer enviously through the glass windows of the boxes at the delectables I couldn't afford—toothsome steaks and bilberry pies. Then I'd invest a nickel in a cup of iced tea. I hated the noxious stuff but it was the only thing that cost 5 cents. You put the nickel in a slot, and out of the orifice pours just enough tea to fill a cup, which you hold beneath it. One day the spout didn't stop pouring and people came from all over the café for bonus cups of



iced tea. I stood by, near to tears, knowing I couldn't drink the concoction, wishing it was bilberry pies.

The hopeless, aimless quality of the city began to soak into me. I had no money. I hated being by myself. I would sit on park benches, with various sorts of dejection nibbling at my spirits like large grey rats. I wished I was married. All my teeth seemed full of holes. I kept telephoning the scholarship organization, but all I could get was a painter, who kept telling me angrily that there was no one there because the office was being redecorated. He said he wanted a switchboard allowance. Then one day, when I really had no money left at all and wanted to be married more than ever, fate came into play again. I was walking down Broadway, dejectedly comparing the prices of mink coats, when a stout bespectacled man bounded out of a travel agency and offered me two dollars if I would hurry to Grand Central Station and find a certain traveller whom this travel agent had forgotten to supply with rail tickets. At multi-level Grand Central Station I paged the throngs of people and discovered the unticketed tourist just before his train was due to depart. He was very relieved and gave me two dollars. I went back to the travel agency to report that all was well and the bespectacled man beamed and gave me two more dollars. I went back to the Y.M.C.A. and washed my socks, still wanting to be married, but knowing that I was going to be able to live, though without eating, until my 'plane left.

Rhymes for a Modern Nursery

RING-A-RING o' neutrons,
A pocket full of positrons,

A fission! A fission!

We all fall down.

☆

Hey diddle diddle,
The physicists fiddle,

The Bleep jumped over the moon.
The little dog laughed to see such
fun

And died the following June.

☆

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch some heavy water.
They mixed it with the dairy milk
And killed my youngest daughter.

☆

Two blind mice,
See how they run!
They each ran out of the lab with an
oath,
For the scientist's wife had injected
them both.
Did you ever see such a neat little
growth
On two blind mice?

Little Miss Muffet
Crouched on a tuffet,
Collecting her shell-shocked wits.
There dropped (from a glider)
An H-bomb beside her—
Which frightened Miss Muffet to bits.

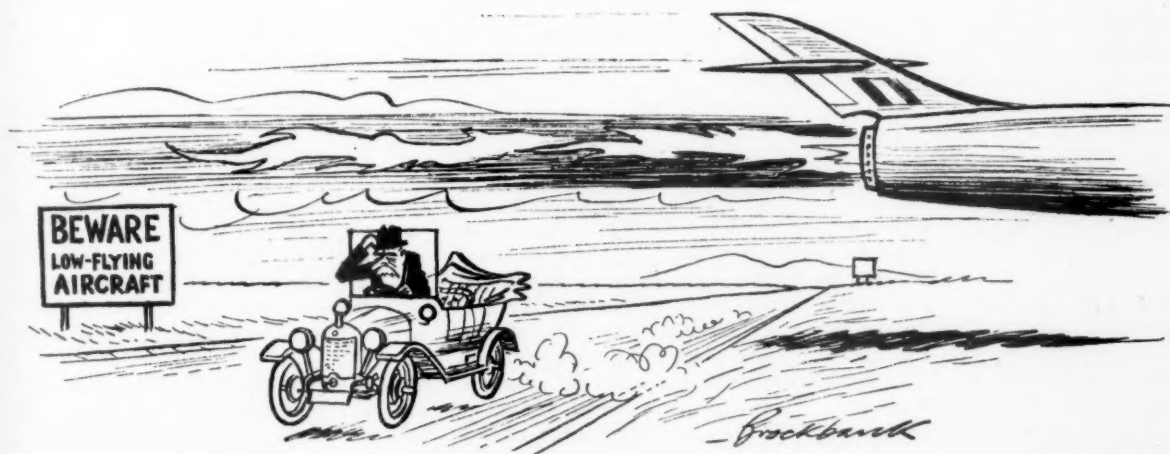
☆

"Bah, bah, black Bleep,
You haven't any bombs."
"Yes, sir! Yes, sir!
Here one comes.
One for the master
And one for the dame
And one for the little boy
Who lives in the lane."

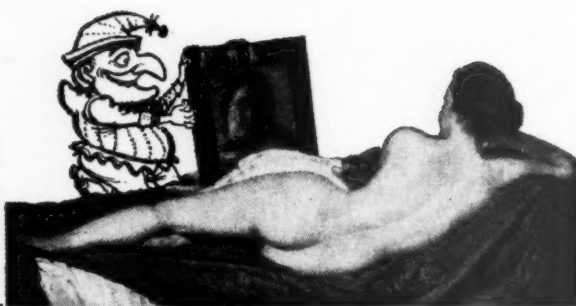
☆

One, two,
The 'plane got through.
Three, four,
Flat on the floor!
Five, six,
We're in a fix.
Seven, eight,
Too late! Too late!
Nine, ten,
Where are my men?
Eleven, twelve,
Dig and delve.

PAUL DEHN



FOR
WOMEN



Hogsheads in the Home

ANY family, on deciding that home-bottled wine is the solution of all problems posed by devotion to Bacchus, may well fancy that a few hours in the role of Simon the Cellarer are all that is needed to fill every bin; after which the happy bottlers will stand, bumpers in hand, toasting each other in a "young sensitive wine that should develop an interesting personality." The teamwork, they imagine, will have been perfect, jugs and bottles will have been spotless, and nothing, from muslin for straining, to mallets for knocking in an unusually tough cork, will have been forgotten. In practice, of course, it is a dishevelled team of fume-bemused wrecks who, at least two hours behind schedule, will finally tip the hogshead on to its nose and catch the last drops in the baby's polythene bath, snatched for the occasion from its normal dual career as laundry basket and roof-leak catcher.

For geographical reasons most home bottlers start importing through Bordeaux, and a hogshead of red Bordeaux can become



quite a pen pal before it settles down as a member of the family. Letters, Customs-forms and drafts on the bank pass between the parties involved, romantically designated as growers, shippers and importers, but the most romantic moment of all comes with the announcement that the barrel is on the high seas, f.o.b. per s.s. *Hispaniola*, Master: L. J. Silver. Careful plans should be laid for the hogshead's reception, bearing in mind that the men who roll it off the railway lorry are much the best hands at rolling it up on to the crate where it will repose a fortnight until tapped. If these key figures escape, unskilled hands will have to coax the hogshead up planks, with the risk of re-enacting that early scene from

A Tale of Two Cities when a barrel is smashed on the cobbles outside M. Defarge's wineshop. By this time it will be clear to everybody that a hogshead of wine is a domestic bully, but unlike one's life-long enemies, the sulky boiler and the voracious

washing machine, this bully is only a visitor. In the lull between the arrival

and the tapping, bottles must be counted, spiders that have moved in since they were washed evicted, and a team collected who are prepared to dedicate themselves for a day to filling two gross of bottles on terms to be arranged among themselves. But after the barrel is tapped there is no going back or even hating. If corks are tough, or a borrowed bottling machine recalcitrant, the sun may set and the stars appear, but the bottlers must go on till midnight.

Admittedly the actual tapping is a thrilling and nerve-racking moment, particularly if by an oversight no tap has been supplied with the barrel and a canal system has to be evolved, in which a tap bought in England is bandaged with surgical gauze while the wine flows through an eighteenth-century strainer. Bottling days are apt also to be days when domestic crises break, and to six bottlers, half-way through their work in a heat wave, a messenger who comes on flying feet to announce that the well has pumped dry appears to have genius in the timing of unwelcome news. Mrs. Porter had at least soda-water to wash her feet in; claret on the other hand is positively an ablutionary handicap.

VIOLET POWELL

Tea and Sentiment

IT is sad news for sentimentalists that Gunters have closed their doors in Bruton Street and now only do outside catering. Tea at Gunters had a dilettante flavour long lost to Mayfair; a flavour that went with the man of leisure who stepped out of a Michael Arlen novel, a Clarges Street flat, a Lonsdale drawing-room comedy, or a Red Label Bentley.

Gunters' move from Curzon Street to

Bruton Street, only a year ago, was a withdrawal to take up a last desperate stand against the barbarians and the coffee bars; and the Curzon Street establishment itself was never the same since it was rebuilt after the war. The big windows gave a glimpse of the park, but the restaurant was too brightly spacious for romance, and romance was essential for a tea-shop so ill-placed to catch the shopper or matinée theatregoer. All Gunters' customers in the old days, as they

nibbled at their brown bread-and-butter, were toying with romance in some shape or form . . . considering it, rejecting it, recalling it, confiding it, or elegantly winding it up—if not for themselves, on behalf of their friends.

There now remains but the Piccadilly Hotel for tea and sentiment—the Piccadilly which has always been the subaltern's first homing thought from abroad, and which still carries on the tradition of tea with music which has elsewhere been killed by the increased

demands of modern life and the Musicians' Union. Even establishments in very modest categories used to have their tea-time music. How many people, once young and hard-up in London, must remember the Slaters opposite the Piccadilly Hotel which was bombed in 1940. It had an orchestra of three ageing Graces in sea-green rayon dresses: piano, violin and 'cello, they sadly sawed away with cold bare arms and protuberant elbows to the rattle of electro-plated tea-pots and the chatter of cup on saucer. It was tea with Gilbert and Sullivan, Ivor Novello, Noël Coward, and the Indian Love Lyrics. There were scones and toasted tea-cake, and a plate of fancies. It was tea for two, and very nice too.

MARJORIE HAIG

Fame

I'M on the front page of *The Tatler*,
"A Master of Foxhounds at Home";

I lean on the edge
Of a window's sharp ledge
By a clock with a curious dome.

My smile, to be frank, is affected,
And doesn't entirely succeed,
I've a curl of the lip
Which would call for the whip
On the face of the horses I breed.

I was three when I started to follow,
And four when I started to jump,
So reaching my age
Before making this page
Not surprisingly gives me the
hump . . .

The more so, because I'm quite certain
That but for a casual call
By a top *Tatler* spy
Who discovered that I
Was a sort of ninth cousin to Countess
de Pye,
I shouldn't have made it at all.
CAROLE PAINE

"Two children made whoopee on a bus ride yesterday—Prince Charles and Princess Anne . . . Who saw the royal romp . . . ? Just two solemn-faced uniformed policemen. They were in charge of the rompers."
Daily Express

No cloakroom fee, presumably.

What the Bee Sucks

THE currently fashionable elixir of youth and beauty is a comestible stolen from the queen bee's larder. Named royal jelly by the apiculturists, it is a gland secretion provided by the youngest worker bees, its raw ingredients being nectar and pollen. This is the food which makes the queen bee grow, within six days of birth, five times her size, live five years instead of the ordinary bee's meagre month or so, and spend her long life laying two and a half times her own weight in eggs daily.

Such alarming claims are not made for the effect of royal jelly on humans; but it is believed that, as a vitalizer, there is something to it. In France, Jean Bouchardeau's bee-keeping establishment has specialized for a long time in the production of *Gelée Royale*, much of which goes to French pharmaceutical laboratories, and some of which is sold, preserved in honey, as a tonic to take in a teaspoon before breakfast. This Bouchardeau *Gelée Royale* reached Fortnum and Mason's last year and, although it is one of the most expensive teaspoonfuls one can buy in this shop of delectable tit-bits, it has proved a

popular Piccadilly line. Likewise at Harrods the customers keep coming back for more *Apiserum* at five guineas a box of twenty-four capsules.

Royal jelly has also arrived in the cosmetic departments. Imported from France to Harrods, there is Orlane's *Crème à la Gelée Royale*; and at Fortnum's and other stores there is Apiella Skin Vitalizer. This, by replenishing the skin with moisture, vitamins, and hormones and restoring its elasticity, aims at the radiantly rejuvenated effect which is the heart's desire of every woman over thirty. Indeed the future holds no terrors now: royal jelly in its edible form will keep every woman going as busy as a bee; and in its cosmetic form it will ensure she is always as beautiful as a queen.

ALISON ADBURGHAM

"Greek dramatic actress Melina Mercouri revealed yesterday why she failed to turn up for an interview on Monday's B.B.C. TV 'To-night' programme. Explained Melina: 'A woman from the B.B.C. wanted to ask me what is the way to be a wonderful actress. That is not a question to ask a lady . . .'"

News Chronicle

Go ahead, we're broad-minded.



"Another new dress?"





Brim Full of Oil

ONE of the economic axioms on which economic thinking has proceeded during the past decade is that the world demand for oil must go on increasing year after year, inexorably, at a cumulative rate and, therefore, in a manner that will keep the shareholders concerned happy and prosperous. Alas! axioms are occasionally less axiomatic than they appear—and so it has befallen on this occasion.

The world demand for oil last year failed to expand at anything like the predicted rate. As a result oil is now pouring out of the eyes, noses, and ears of the great companies. The tanks and tankers are full; some wells are being shut down. Prices of crude are even beginning to crumble. Barely a year ago Western Europe was gripped by the Suez oil crisis. In that crisis of shortages lies much of the explanation of the present crisis of abundance.

Suez had a twofold effect on the oil situation. It stimulated the search for oil west of Suez; it also discouraged the use of oil in Western Europe. The Texan oil millionaires were stirred by appeals to their patriotism and their bank balances to "step on the gas." In Venezuela the oil drills screeched to a new pitch of activity. Even the Saharan sand has begun to ooze oil.

In Western Europe one government after another saw in the oil shortage both an excuse and a justification for raising more revenue. The taxes on oil and petrol went up and in some cases have remained high enough to cause a substantial reduction of consumption. To drive a car in France and Italy to-day, at the standard price of petrol, is the rich man's pastime. The demand for oil is elastic—as the economists say. The tax of 2s. 6d. a gallon, of which we in Britain are reminded by the informative pump every time we "fill her up," is enough to deter all but the keenest or expense-account motorist. Many a house-owner swore a year ago that he

was no longer going to be dependent for his comforts on that unspeakable fellow Nasser and promptly converted his central heating system from oil to coke. One of the mildest winters of the century and a sizeable economic recession in the United States have helped to sate the appetite for oil.

The oil companies, bless them, picked up the broken pieces of the Suez catastrophe with immense skill. By miracles of improvisation and co-operation they kept the essential needs of Western Europe supplied. They built new tankers, increased alternative sources of supply and by their resourcefulness helped to create the plethora of oil which is swamping us now that the Canal is open and the Syrian pipelines are again repaired.

Since troubles never come singly the prospect for oil has recently been further overcast by the emergence of ZETA and the large demands for new capital which the oil companies are making on the world markets. ZETA, with its promise of the world's power-needs being

ultimately satisfied from some dollops of sea-water, can be forgotten for the moment. It belongs to that future about which a famous economist refused to trouble himself "because in the long run we are all dead."

The demands for capital—witness the recent B.P. issue and the current Royal Dutch Shell operations—are vast. Whatever the oil boys do they do on a big scale. The new issues were bound to depress the market.

Out of this accumulation of seeming reverses there emerges the kind of situation in which the bold investor makes money. One can apply to it Marshal Foch's appreciation: *Mon centre cède, ma droite recule, situation excellente. J'attaque.* Equally apt is J. P. Morgan's dictum that he usually made money by going against the common herd of the market.

To tuck away a few Shells, Burmahs, B.P.s or even some of the Canadian oil shares that have collapsed so disastrously in recent months should "in the long run" cause no regrets.

SLICKER

* * *



There's Husbandry in Devon

THE whole field of research lies untouched on the relation between climate and temperament. An obvious example of this inter-dependence may be observed in the Metropolis where the dampness of the Thames valley is the determining factor in the lack of crispness in the conversation there.

And here on the Devonshire coast the inclement and boisterous winds blowing in from the Atlantic are, I think, the direct cause of our perverse tendency towards frugality. There can be no other explanation. I have come across several examples of this meteorological insanity in my own village. It is as if a gale of parsimony blew through us.

At any rate that is what the Electricity Authority conclude when they come to read our meters. One of my neighbours has only a single electric bulb in his house, which he carries from room to room, tripping over the long

flex meanwhile. Another, a woman, admitted that "I only switch on the electrics in order to see to light me paraffin lamp." A third, given a wireless set, has sat through a silent winter with nothing but an aerial attached in the vain hope "of catching some of these 'ere waves for free" rather than go to the expense of putting the plug in too.

Our miserliness even affects our husbandry. One of my neighbours has attempted what might be called a self-sufficient or closed economy. Finding his farm was overrun with rats he decided to start keeping mink because he'd heard that these animals would eat rodents. He started to catch the rats in traps. The system flourished. When he takes the pelt from the mink he leaves the skinned bodies lying around his yard to feed his population of rats.

Last month a smallholder was found by his doctor to be suffering from starvation. Yet every morning he had sent thirty gallons of milk from his farm to the factory. "I can't afford to drink milk when it fetches nearly three-and-six a gallon," he complained.

Even death doesn't give us any relief from our bleak natures. One old man here buried his wife some time ago. When the vicar observed him tending her grave and planting daffodil bulbs on it he was touched by the old widower's grief. Of course the spring revealed that those bulbs were shallots.

RONALD DUNCAN



CRITICISM



BOOKING OFFICE

Oh, for a Night in Bohemia

Memoirs of a Public Baby. Philip O'Connor, Faber, 18/-

BREEZILY introduced by Mr. Stephen Spender, Mr. Philip O'Connor demonstrates that he possesses the unusual gift of being able to write coherently about the incoherent. His autobiography is as good an example as you could well find of bohemian life—to use one of those phrases that have largely lost their meaning nowadays but have to be employed for want of a better term—not only in its most depressing form but also bohemian life as it particularly flourished in the nineteen-thirties. Mr. O'Connor might have followed his chequered career at any period of history, but his own approach to it, expressed with admirable clarity, is thirtyish to the core.

One could probably make the generalization with safety that most bohemians come from backgrounds where bohemianism has been discouraged, or at least not on the whole practised. If you look into their past there is usually an uncle or great-aunt who behaved oddly, suggesting a hereditary inclination in that direction, but the subject himself (or herself) tends to be reacting against stuffy home life. There is, in the same way, a proneness for the children of bohemians to yearn for conventional ways.

However, Mr. O'Connor turns out to be that comparatively rare bird, a second-generation bohemian. He gives a striking picture of his mother, who had perhaps a touch of Burmese blood and was the deserted wife of an Irish doctor. In the author's eyes the doctor does not entirely succeed in making good a claim to be his true father, in the light of the personal appearance and general behaviour of the character called Uncle Haslam. Mrs. O'Connor lived periodically with Uncle Haslam,

a genuine oddity who collected pipes and knobkerries.

The upbringing here described is a very extraordinary one, quite impossible to summarize. Mr. O'Connor was obviously a child of unusual intelligence whose strange circumstances greatly increased traits already strongly developed in himself. Even more than most children of his kind he was driven to a secret world of his own imagination. He was mainly brought up by an eccentric Civil Servant, hermit, misogynist, intermittently Communist, with a passion for gadgets, e.g. arranging that he could cook his breakfast without rising from the stretcher upon which he normally slept.

Various plans for giving Mr. O'Connor some sort of formal education and start in life fell through, chiefly, so it appears, from his own overweening

conceit, which at times seems to border on paranoia. He is himself the first to point this out. He embarked almost immediately on a vagabond life of existing from hand to mouth, the recital of which occasionally reminds one of Maurice Sachs's *Le Sabbat* (translated into English as *Day of Wrath*), although, throughout his many tribulations—and with due respect to his status as a ne'er-do-well—Mr. O'Connor presents himself as rather less of a scallywag than the insupportable Sachs.

Indeed one of the oddest features of *Memoirs of a Public Baby* is the preoccupation with guilt felt by the author about himself. He is always grouching about Anglo-Saxon, C. of E., middle-class prudery and conventionality, but he conveys no conviction of release from these characteristics, except in the sense that he always behaves in the opposite manner. It is like the requirement of faith to take serious part in a Black Mass. There is in Mr. O'Connor no Latin detachment. Again, in justice to him as a writer, he often points out how he was influenced by "snobbish" motives, reacting against his own *nostalgie de la boue*.

Although no longer a practising Communist, he has done his stint of selling the *Daily Worker* in his time—a true intellectual of the 'thirties—and he retains an admiration and respect for the Good Old Cause; though it is hard to see how any self-respecting Communist government could do anything with him but pack him off to the salt mines as soon as possible. He made two efforts to join the Army during the war but was found unfit. That was a pity, because it might well have turned out that his particular brand of egotism could have found relief in military discipline.

Mr. O'Connor writes very well, and has at times successfully sold his poems. All the same, I have the impression that he may not be a frustrated artist. I think his frustrations could be in the world of

NOVEL FACES



II—NANCY MITFORD

*Tho' cool the clime, Love's story she'll pursue
And gaily sort the Non-U from the U.*

action, in spite of his toying not only with literature but also with painting and music. His nervous energy might perhaps have been harnessed to some form of money-making. He seems to lack the interest in others that makes a writer. Anyway, he has written an interesting if somewhat eerie book.

ANTHONY POWELL

The Bombs of Orsini. Michael St. John Packe. *Secker and Warburg*, 25/-

Even Hollywood at its most irresponsible would have rejected the adventures of Orsini as too absurd. Exiled for his part in countless risings he became the tool of Mazzini (at anchor in the Fulham Road) on futile cloak-and-dagger missions which ended in the great Austrian prison at Mantua. He escaped, and less than two years later was in Paris, with two pounds of fulminate of mercury in a stomach, for his crazily amateur attempt on the Emperor. At the guillotine he behaved, as always, with courage, Louis Napoleon having tried and failed to save him.

Vain, earnest and madly romantic, he seemed doomed to engender a heavy air of comic opera. Mr. Packe has gathered background information so thickly that the reader is inclined to trip over it, but he gives a good idea of the chaotic state of Italy, and his accounts of the escape from Mantua and of the murderous pantomime outside the Paris Opera are excellent.

E. O. D. K.

Esprit de Corps. Lawrence Durrell. *Faber*, 10/6

Despite a rather heavy framework of narrator, calls for drinks and the rest of it, this little book of farcical episodes from diplomatic life in post-war Yugoslavia is unpretentiously gay and amusing. The wild mishaps are sometimes rather old-fashioned, but it seems right that the atmosphere of Embassy social life should be old-fashioned.

The tales are far more impressive in detail than in construction. An anecdote of rather mechanical knock-about humour becomes quite a different kind of writing when one of Mr. Durrell's comparisons reminds the reader that he is known for the fine precision of his poetry: for example, the train on which the Diplomatic Corps were sent from Belgrade to Zagreb to celebrate Liberation Day had a furnace which "was being passionately fed by some very hairy men in cloth caps who looked like Dostoevsky's publishers," or Japanese "sounds like someone sand-papering a cheese-wire," or "The Italian Ambassador who looked as if her anger would succeed in volatilizing her."

R. G. G. P.

Beethoven and His Nephew. Editha and Richard Sterba. *Dobson*, 30/-

Thousands of books have been written about Beethoven, nearly all of them presenting a highly idealized picture of the man, following the example of

Schindler, who destroyed two hundred and sixty-four of the four hundred extant Conversation Books lest they should show the deaf Master in an unprepossessing light.

The present study, by two doctors—one of musicology, the other medicine—is a careful analysis of Beethoven's struggles to obtain legal and moral ascendancy over his nephew. The legend of "the graceless Karl" is finally dispersed and there emerges instead the figure of the older man—dictatorial, over-possessive, prone to rush to violent extremes and sadly lacking in the most ordinary know-how in the field of personal relationships. An intensely human figure though, arousing our deepest understanding and compassion. Some kind of crisis seemed necessary to the health of Beethoven's creative processes; indeed his greatest music sprang from these inner conflicts, and to see it for the supreme expression of man's ideals that it is, there is no need to build an ethically ideal character out of its creator.

J. D.

The Desert and the Green. The Earl of Lytton. *Macdonald*, 25/-

Apart from fascinating glimpses of his adored grandfather, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, who used to come down to dinner at eleven-thirty dressed as a sheikh, Lord Lytton's autobiography is for the first hundred pages an amiable, slightly priggish, account of his youth, Downside leading to the Rifle Brigade. But from the moment he was seconded to the King's African Rifles his book becomes interesting, for he found himself in lone and happy command of difficult frontier posts in Kenya. His big game stories are modest and exciting, but better still are the sympathetic portraits of his African friends.

Later, North Africa, Greece and Vienna, and still interesting. A Tory of independent views, Lord Lytton is outspoken in his dislike for our policies and statesmen; one would not expect tameness in a man who in the war slept on the floor without a mattress to keep himself hard, having long risen at 5.30 for a cold bath. It is only a pity that this self-discipline has not curtailed his indiscriminate use of exclamation marks.

E. O. D. K.

The First Labour Government 1924. Richard W. Lyman. *Chapman and Hall*, 25/-

This American thesis, though it covers most aspects of the subject, is really aimed at solving the problem of what happened to the Liberal Party after the break-up of the Coalition. Mr. Lyman's greatest concentration of detail is on the election that put Labour in and the election that turned it out. He has used some obscure periodical sources and has interviewed a good many survivors of the Labour Party of a generation ago. He is good on currents



"Okay. Okay. But who, may I ask, invented the doughnut?"

of opinion and quietly amusing about people.

Mr. Lyman appreciates Wheatley, dislikes MacDonald, Snowden and Thomas, is undecided about the Webbs and regards Henderson perhaps a little too narrowly. (Arthur Greenwood said he was the ablest man he had met in public life.) In his next edition he could pay more attention to the importance of the small group of Civil Service-trained Labour Members. Bad governments are more enjoyably puzzling to read about than good ones; this sorry record is even more extraordinary when one remembers that the next Labour Government failed in just the same way.

R. G. G. P.

Design

The January number of *Design* (3/-), the organ of the Council of Industrial Design, is a special number dealing with hotels. It contains a comprehensive ten-part survey, excellently illustrated, in which the problems of designing, equipping and decorating hotels to-day are considered in a realistic and stimulating way.

Marion. John Bingham. *Gollancz*, 12/6

Though it concerns a murder, several murders in fact, there is no mystery in *Marion*; indeed the author reveals the murderer's name in his second sentence. Mr. Bingham is no carpenter of jigsaws; his talent is for the creation of agonizing suspense. Briefly the story tells of a newspaperman who, while watching a murder investigation from, as it were, the touchline, suddenly finds himself the chief suspect. The newspaperman's rather raffish circle are admirably drawn, but Mr. Bingham's real genius is for

policemen; his police, and all the details of their procedure, are extraordinarily convincing. And the suspense is wonderfully contrived and maintained. The book is, in fact, well up to the very high standard Mr. Bingham has set himself.

B. A. Y.

AT THE PLAY

The Iceman Cometh (ARTS)

Cat On a Hot Tin Roof
(COMEDY)

EUGENE O'NEILL was incapable of compression. *The Iceman Cometh* lasts four hours, excluding intervals, which is at least an hour too long. It has too many characters, who talk too much and too repetitively. Some of its implications are obscure. And yet, though one may itch to use a blue pencil, the play has a strength and rhythm that make the time pass surprisingly quickly. It has the fascination of a vast piece of rather cumbrous machinery, compelling us to watch for the same parts to reappear. The O'Neill whose earnest solemnity sometimes invited parody seems to have stepped aside for an author who understood the humour as well as the tragedy of his characters. In spite of the squalor of the dosshouse saloon in which its whole action takes place, at moments *The Iceman Cometh* is very funny.

Gorki's *The Lower Depths* is an obvious comparison, but that allows a ray of hope, whereas here there is absolutely none. The bums in the dosshouse have reached bottom, living timelessly in a half-life of boozy dreams. The English captain, the Boer general (the date is 1912), the policeman, the negro gambler, the Harvard soak and the rest subsist on the charity of their irascible but philanthropic host, a ratty little Irishman, and on the satisfaction of pretending that to-morrow they will pull themselves together and make a place again in the world.

All the mud in this torpid pond is suddenly stirred up by the arrival of a very active fish, a successful salesman who returns periodically to visit his old friends. But now, reformed and teetotal, he turns his salesmanship to their conversion in a whirlwind campaign that drives them out, one by one, to try again. It is a terrible failure, and by evening they are all back again, their dreams shattered. They turn on him in fury, to discover gradually that what had changed him was the death of his wife, whom he had shot to put her out of her misery at his chronic unfaithfulness. At first he makes it sound an act of compassion, but as his confession continues he begins to rave, and before the police remove him he admits that hatred was his motive. To the dejected bums his apparent madness comes as an enormous relief, for it makes them feel sane men hoaxed, and the play

ends in a happy gush of whisky that brings the wheel round almost to where it started.

I find the salesman puzzling. The meaning of his message, or its lack, depends on how mad he is intended to be, and this is difficult to decide. The other unsatisfactory person is a boy who has blown the gaff on his revolutionary mother and her friends, and who continually badgers the ex-anarchists for sympathy. His suicide gives this lone wolf a fine moment at the end, when his detachment melts into panic made more dreadful against the drunken revelry of the others, but the boy is the only boring character in the evening.

In spite of its evident faults *The Iceman Cometh* is a big play, not merely in length, but in feeling and compassion. O'Neill seems to have understood his down-and-outs completely, and in the best production at the Arts for a long time Peter Wood succeeds wonderfully in cramming so much on to a small stage, creating an unforgettable atmosphere to which Hutchinson Scott's grimy set contributes notably. The sketches of debilitated character are much more than superficial. Those by Patrick Magee and Jack MacGowran as the ex-anarchist and the host are particularly good, and Ian Bannen sells conversion with a dash that must have been a byword in the hardware business.

When I saw *Cat On a Hot Tin Roof* in Paris last spring I wrote here that if you lump together lust, sexual frustration, perversion, cancer, dipsomania, lameness, greed, seduction, thunder, lightning, disgust and heat, they can scarcely fail to add up to what is often loosely called a strong play. It seemed to me then a very pretentious piece of work, noisily written in a small but adolescently pungent vocabulary, and it still does; a hysterical erotic hotpot of bedroom life in a human zoo. Will Maggie, by sufficiently determined strip-teasing, contrive to get a baby from her husband, a whisky-laden footballer in a lovely psychological mess? One really cannot care. No wonder the French critics held their heads at this latest example of the American passion for abnormality among the inarticulate.

Only one of the characters comes out in the round, with genuine feelings, the bullying vulgarian father who doesn't know he is dying until his son tells him in anger. He is a disgusting old brute, but in such company one cannot help warming to him as at least a credible human being. The long scene between these two, though Tennessee Williams subscribes to it to the American stage convention that it is almost impossible for father and son to communicate the simplest thought, is the only one that holds dramatic interest.

The play is already made slow by the maddening habit of Mr. Williams' characters of repeating their lines over and



Hickey—IAN BANNEN

Harry Hope—JACK MACGOWRAN

[*The Iceman Cometh*]

over again. Peter Hall could have driven it along faster, though his production arrives at a fair zoological atmosphere. Kim Stanley's performance as Maggie makes me want to see her in a part with more depth, Leo McKern puts a powerful animal kick into the old father, and Paul Massie deals adequately with Maggie's impossible husband. Among the minor characters there is patchy acting.

Recommended

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

A Midsummer Night's Dream (Old Vic—8/1/58). *Lysistrata* (Royal Court)—15/1/58). Aristophanes' bawdy peace play. *The Happy Man* (Westminster—25/12/57), an unusual comedy.

ERIC KEOWN

AT THE PICTURES

Cowboy—Bitter Victory

I FOUND this week's three all interesting, in their way (even *Legend of the Lost* was visually interesting, though the contemptuously flagrant commercialism of its story, or formula, drove me away in irritation within half an hour), but the best as a film is a Western, *Cowboy* (Director: Delmer Daves), the credit titles of which give a surrealistic stir to one's associations with the announcement that it is based on a book by Frank Harris. Forget this, however, and simply take it as a good Western in which that happens to be the name of one of the principal characters.

It is noteworthy in giving some idea of the real work of cowboys, the day-to-day job they were there to do. The period is the early eighteen-seventies; they fight Indians, in the line of duty, but there is no gunplay among themselves, nor any of that flashy business involving extreme quickness on the draw. The only non-Indians shot, as far as I remember, are a couple of cockroaches and a spider in an hotel room in Chicago. The cowboy's work is driving cattle across country, and looking after them, and selling them; and this film convincingly shows him at it.

The story is quite conventionally based on a situation of antagonism between a hardened expert and a brash beginner, and conventionally decorated with a wistful hopeless love and a final "new understanding" as the result of an episode of violence; but the texture, the fabric of the narrative is full of excellent things. We learn the job as the tyro (Jack Lemmon) learns it, from his first choice and painful—to him—breaking of a horse (his mentor has remarked earlier on "all this hogwash about horses")—"no sensible man loves horses," those animals with a "brain the size of a walnut"), to his nightmare struggle in a railway-truck full of cows beginning to trample each other. Particularly good is the impression of the



Tom Reece—GLENN FORD

[Cowboy

men's life on the trail, the camp-fire conversations (one man the others always facetiously accuse of having "et them Indians" sheepishly protests every time that "it was only a haunch"), the conditions from which they periodically escape, when the cattle have been delivered, in a roaring three- or four-day celebration in Chicago. There is also a great deal of visual pleasure to be had from the colour photography (Charles Lawton). All told, very well worth seeing.

Bitter Victory (Director: Nicholas Ray) is interesting but unsatisfactory: there are so many good things in it, and yet as a whole it has such radical faults. I got the feeling of a sort of clever undergraduate production, with many excellent, perceptive moments of detail, but as a whole more or less vitiated by shallowness and superficiality in the presentation of character and motive.

It is based on a book by René Hardy, who collaborated on the script; I don't know the book, but here the characters and their situation are in essence quite conventional. "Let's make a story by involving a cowardly major and a brave intellectual captain, who loves the major's wife, in the same desert-war action"—one imagines some such decision beforehand; then an emotional climax is worked up about the question of ability to kill at close quarters and admit that if that is murder war is murder too. The major's "bitter victory" in allowing the captain to die seemed to me a device of the sort that a young writer finds it satisfying to show off: "Look, I'm being stern, unsentimental, uncompromising, bitter—you didn't think I was old

enough, did you?" (It would make no difference if the film-makers happened to be in their seventies—I still say it seems an essentially "young" device.)

The early part of the film is the best: there the ingenuity and observation shown in conveying the scene, the cinematic skill used to present the surface situation can be enjoyed and appreciated. But gradually it becomes evident that these characters have not been fully imagined at all: they are symbols, there to have an intellectual argument, and not a very original one. Most of us these days, I suppose, agree that war is murder; are we still expected to get satisfaction from hearing the idea melodramatically rubbed in to a cardboard character representing the people who don't?

Survey

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

In London: last days (a sequel is coming up) of the Indian *Pather Panchali* (1/1/58) for anyone interested in people, *The Picasso Mystery* (29/1/58) for all willing to use their eyes, *Around the World in Eighty Days* (17/7/57) for almost everybody. *No Down Payment* (29/1/58) is an excellently made piece about the difficulties of four young married couples on a housing estate in California; *Blue Murder at St. Trinian's* (1/1/58) is a good farce.

Best release in my opinion is *Man on Fire* (11/12/57), with Bing Crosby in a straight part. *Count Five and Die* (8/1/58) is about spies in the war, well done; *Davy* (15/1/58) is a simple sentimental story about show business, with good bits. RICHARD MALLETT

ON THE AIR

Potted Jane

I HAVE never fully grasped the aim of those who "adapt" classic novels for serialization on television. As plays they generally make unwieldy, sprawling lumps, and there is no reason why they shouldn't, since the people who wrote them conceived them as novels, very sensibly paying no heed to "dramatic" form and convention, and using no stage dialogue. I conclude that the television people work on the assumption that devotees of Dickens, for example, will be beside themselves with glee simply to watch an actor dressed as Micawber or Bill Sikes going through the motions of some well-loved scene; and that those who have not yet discovered Dickens will be encouraged by these telescoped jumbles to besiege the public libraries. Indeed I understand that this latter actually happens. I am delighted, but amazed.

If my first encounter with Jane Austen had been the opening instalment of the B.B.C.'s current *Pride and Prejudice* serial, I should have made a firm note in my library list to avoid the dreary woman like the plague for the rest of my life. Something has been achieved, certainly: I would have thought it hardly possible to present the first few chapters of *Pride and Prejudice* without planting some vague suspicion in the viewer's mind that the book has wit and style, but this reprehensible manoeuvre was managed without a hitch. The whole thing was lifeless, laboured and unconvincing, like



Ted Ray

Another enterprise which recently saddened me was the first of the monthly *Ted Ray Shows* (B.B.C.). I can remember when this lively comic was a delightful music-hall act, billed, I believe, as "Fiddlin' and Foolin'." Now he is a Television Name, and must be given his own show, and, assisted by Kenneth Connor and others, made to plod through



Robert Morley

some monstrous dream sequence out of *Mrs. Dale's Diary*. I had high expectations of Alan Badel as Darcy, but they petered out after five minutes. As for Hugh Sinclair as Mr. Bennet, he reminded me of Hugh Sinclair in period costume, and I never think that is quite enough. The young ladies were pretty gowns, and seemed to be acting. I never think that is enough either. Nevertheless, I shall watch the remaining instalments with undiminished hope.

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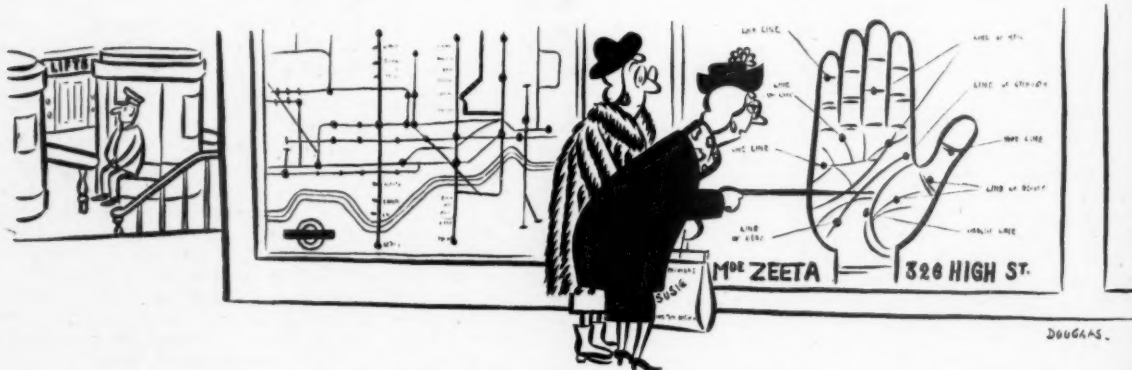
an hour of the most banal claptrap the wit of mortal man could be persuaded to devise. The three mortal men responsible for this script, whose names I have hurriedly forgotten, are probably hard-working men and true, and may manage to get the show off the ground before too many months go by; but unless that first piece of situation comedy is improved on, I have my doubts. If I may offer a word of simple, constructive advice, I beg everyone concerned to remember that even situation comedy ought to be funny.

How much happier is the splendid fooling of Eric Sykes and his cronies when they get to work in a *Saturday Spectacular!* (ATV). Nobody could claim that their material is any more cerebral than the afore-mentioned charade: but it's funny.

I gather that Robert Morley is to be recalled in due course to Val Parnell's *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* (ATV) in his dual capacity as compère and director of the revels in "Beat the Clock." If the work pleases him we must wish him well, for he performs both functions satisfactorily. As a compère he uses what I would describe as a hesitant, imitation-amateur approach, delivering the occasional witticism as though half afraid it might turn to ashes in his mouth, with a surprised grin when it doesn't. As the jolly uncle in "Beat the Clock" he has made me sit through three of those embarrassing pieces of audience-participation nonsense, by what I take to be his sheer hypnotism. But I believe it might be better for us all in the long run if he sat at home instead and wrote more plays. HENRY TURTON



Kenneth Connor



"That's the Bakerloo Line—I think."

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